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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0676  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 001133

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KAWC](#) [RW](#)  
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER BRIEF DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON RUPTURE  
WITH FRANCE

REF: A. KIGALI 1130

[1](#)B. KIGALI 1125

Classified By: Ambassador Michael R. Arietti, reason 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. On November 25, Foreign Minister Charles Murigande briefed the diplomatic corps on the GOR decision to break relations with France and expel French diplomats from Rwanda. The decision by a French judge to issue international arrest warrants for nine senior Rwanda officials (reftel) constituted an "attack" on Rwanda and an attempt to "destroy" the Rwandan government, said the Minister, leaving the GOR "no other option." The French ambassador departed November 25, with the rest of the French diplomatic contingent preparing for departure by Monday, November 27. No demonstrations occurred in Kigali over the weekend, and expatriates and Rwandans alike conducted their affairs without restriction. Both the capital and countryside are peaceful. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Briefing the diplomatic community, Murigande said that once French-Rwandan relations had been "clarified" by a full investigation into the French role during the 1994 genocide, a role which he characterized as one of complicity and participation in the planning and execution of that genocide, then dialogue could begin between the two governments. "We want relations with France to be normal," he said, but only after the resolution of France's role in 1994 and before. He cited at length the French government's military support for the militias and military of the previous regime, before, during and after the genocide. He alleged that the French government had "never accepted" a Tutsi-led opposition that overthrew the previous Hutu regime.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Murigande then reviewed at length relations between the GOR and France since 1994, including what he described as repeated attempts by the French government, particularly in the years immediately after the genocide, to damage Rwanda's standing in the international community and prevent Rwanda from accessing resources to rebuild itself. The arrest warrants for the nine senior Rwandans was only the latest effort by France to hurt Rwanda, he said, and the decision to break relations was not done in haste or solely because of these warrants. Rather, this was the culmination of 12 years of "negative" French conduct toward the current government of Rwanda. Better now to break relations and "start fresh," he summarized.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In response to questions from the assembled diplomats, Murigande said that individual French citizens were welcome to remain in Rwanda. Private French citizens,

as well as French nationals employed by other diplomatic missions or aid organizations, such as the European Community (the majority of whose direct-hires are apparently French citizens), were not at risk. The expulsion order applied to French diplomats only. In addition to the French embassy and French government aid programs, the French school and the French cultural center would also be required to close, he said. (Note: local broadcasts of Radio France International have also been halted). While no decision had been taken as to the which foreign mission might be named the Protecting Power for consular and other matters, he anticipated a quick decision (subsequently the GOR accepted the Belgian Embassy's formal request that it be granted such status).

15. (SBU) The French ambassador departed Saturday night, November 25. Other French diplomats busily packed bags and prepared for their departure on Monday. A French employee of the European Union told polchief that a "triage" had been conducted by French embassy staff concerning their possessions: "sell, take or leave with friends, those are the options." One member of another mission purchased fifteen hundred dollars of French champagne at discount prices.

16. (SBU) Saturday November 25 and Sunday November 26 were peaceful and incident free throughout the capital, with no protests or demonstrations of any kind observed in Kigali. The announced expulsion of the French diplomatic contingent had no effect on the rest of the diplomatic community or the expatriate community as a whole, and Rwandans and foreign residents alike conducted their daily affairs without restriction of any kind. For example, hundreds of expatriates and Rwandans attended a long-scheduled Christmas bazaar at a hotel in the heart of the city, including members of the small French community.

17. (C) Comment. We leave the definitive exposition of French government attitudes toward the GOR to our colleagues in Paris, but locally the French Embassy has striven for some time to project an atmosphere of cooperation and comity with the Rwandans. Some of the rhetoric emanating from GOR sources is clearly overheated, for example the repeated claim that France wants to bring back the "genocidaires" and reconstitute the former government. However, the essential claim by the GOR that arrest warrants for the chief of Rwandan armed forces and Rwandan army and other senior military men and women, together with the recommended prosecution of President Kagame, constitutes an attempt to destroy the Rwandan government does not seem an unreasonable interpretation. Removing the President and armed forces chiefs by foreign judicial intervention would effectively decapitate the GOR. This mission and other diplomatic missions have stressed their noninvolvement in what is a white-hot bilateral dispute. The capital and the countryside are calm, and citizens and foreigners alike are free to conduct their everyday affairs as usual. End comment.

ARIETTI